



LWVMpls VOTER

Volume 66, Issue 16

FEBRUARY 2009

Using the Constitution to Change the Electoral College Process

For more than 88 years, LWV and its forebears have wrestled issues of fairness in the national voting process. Since 1970 the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) has had a position in favor of the abolition of the electoral college. LWVUS also has a position in favor of the “direct-popular-vote” method of electing the president and vice president.



The National Popular Vote Compact (NPV) proposes a way to use a “direct-popular-vote” method that does not abolish the electoral college, because to abolish the electoral college would require amending the Constitution, a long and uncertain challenge. Rather than amending the Constitution, the NPV Compact uses the Constitution to look at a different way of considering the “direct-popular-vote.”

Suppose that Minnesotans voted to change the way its electoral votes were allocated. Suppose they voted to cast all of their electoral votes for the presidential and vice presidential candidates that won the *national* popular vote, even if that was different than their *state* popular vote. Four states – Maryland, New Jersey, Illinois, and Hawaii – have already voted to do just that. If enough states would make that decision, so that they would have at least 270 votes among them, it would guarantee that the winner of the national popular vote would be the winner of the national electoral vote. That interstate agreement – to cast the state’s electoral votes for the national popular vote winner – is the National Popular Vote Compact.

During the month of February, members will study and talk about this topic, using materials prepared by LWVUS. These materials are easy to access.

To check it out, go to www.lwvmpls.org and click on *National Popular Vote* on the home page. Everything you need is right there. For Wikipedia users, go to www.wikipedia.org and search for National Popular Vote Compact. You’ll find additional interesting information.

Your opinion is important. LWVUS has requested that we report LWVMpls feedback on the consensus questions as a group report. Unit meetings will use a group consensus format. Individuals may use the format on the next page. Responses will be tallied to develop the group report to LWVUS.

Whether you study this topic on your own, or participate in a unit meeting, your opinion is wanted. Only current members may participate. Please weigh in by the end of February either in the meeting format or by sending your individual response form to:

**LWVMpls, 81 South 7th Street, Suite 335,
Minneapolis MN 55402**

~Connie Cameron
Program Chair

Inside this Issue

NVP Consensus Questions	2
Healthy Legacy Forum	3-5
President’s Letter	6
Welcome Sharon!	6
Unit Meetings	7
Calendar	8

March 5 *Healthy Legacy* Public Forum Provides Information for Unit Discussion at March Meetings

Hundreds of unwanted synthetic chemicals are in our everyday consumer products and are ending up in places they shouldn't—our bodies. They pass from mother to baby and are found in umbilical cord blood, as well as breast milk. They build up with the potential for long-term health impacts. In small amounts these toxic chemicals have been shown to disrupt the normal development of children by interfering with their endocrine systems, and they may contribute to learning disabilities and other harmful outcomes for children.

Our children are experiencing an increased incidence of chronic illness and disability. An estimated 17% of children have learning, developmental or behavioral disabilities, making them candidates for special education. Nationwide, between 1977 and 1994, students requiring special education programs increased by 191 percent. It costs twice as much to educate a student in the special education program. (See Kathleen Schuler's presentation "Healthy Lives, Healthy Minds" at www.healthylegacy.org/resources)



On **March 5**, LWVMpls is co-sponsoring a forum, ***How Can Government Safeguard Our Children and Future Generations***, to provide more information about these issues and how the City of Minneapolis Sustainability Office and the Healthy Legacy Coalition are addressing them. A study guide and information resources about these topics will be on the website, www.lwvmpls.org (Please use the flyer on p. 5 to promote the forum with family, friends and associates.)

Healthy Legacy began as a joint project of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Clean Water Fund of Minnesota in the summer of 2006.

With the addition of six steering committee organizations, the program has developed to represent a broad spectrum of interests including healthcare, citizens with disabilities, environmental justice, and environmental health. LWVMN joins 21 other organizations in supporting Healthy Legacy.

At the forum, Mayor R.T. Rybak will provide the keynote address "Sustainability, Nurturing a Healthy Generation," articulating his vision for the City of Minneapolis citizens as laid out in the *2008 Minneapolis Sustainability Report*. The sections of the report that apply to this forum are healthy infants, asthma, and lead poisoning. See the full report on the Minneapolis website at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/docs/LivingWell_2008AnnualReport.pdf

Joan Higinbotham will moderate the forum. The first panel providing an overview of the issues, will include:

- ✓ Lindsay Dahl, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Healthy Legacy coordinator, will give an overview of the coalition's work to address the problems created by under-regulated chemicals used in everyday products. See <http://www.healthylegacy.org>.
- ✓ Anne Kelly, Pediatrician and Professor at the University of Minnesota, will provide evidence of harm to children.
- ✓ Carolyn Raffensperger, Executive Director of the Science and Environmental Health Network, will discuss legal approaches to the concept of guardianship for future generations.
- ✓ U.S. Congressman Keith Ellison will give an update on national efforts to protect children from toxic chemicals.

Continued on p. 4 and 5

Healthy Legacy cont. from p. 3

A second panel will include:

- ✓ Representative Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives
- ✓ Representative Karen Clark, author of Healthy Legacy Bills in the 2008 session
- ✓ Representative Paul Thissen, Chair of the House Health and Human Services Committee
- ✓ Senator Patricia Torres Ray, Vice-Chair of the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee
- ✓ Minneapolis Councilperson Scott Benson, author of the Minneapolis Environmental Purchasing Policy

Legislative Background

The Healthy Legacy Coalition sponsored a bill in the 2008 Legislative Session, authored by Representative Karen Clark (DFL-Minneapolis) and Senator Sandra Rummel (DFL- White Bear Lake) that called for a phase-out of two toxic chemicals: phthalates in children's products and "deca"—the most common bromiated flame retardant found in our homes. The bill passed in both the House and Senate only to be vetoed by the Governor. The Healthy Legacy Coalition was disappointed when it found that the Governor had vetoed a bill that passed both the House and Senate by wide margins.

In March 2006, Jarnelle Brown, a four-year-old from Minneapolis, died of acute lead poisoning after swallowing a child's bracelet charm made of lead. In response, Sen. Klobuchar and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) co-authored the Toy Safety Measures bill as part of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) S.2663. The bill passed and was signed by President Bush in July 2008. "This is historic legislation that will protect the safety of our children," said Senator Klobuchar. "This bill finally makes it criminal to sell recalled products, bans lead in children's products, and I hope will give parents some peace of mind that the toys in their children's hands are safe." The complete Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (S.2663) is available at www.Thomas.gov

While the CPSIA includes phthalates and lead, it does not address bisphenol-A, deca or many other chemicals contaminating our homes. The Healthy Legacy Coalition has incorporated those chemicals into two legislative policy proposals.

- ✓ **BPA-Free Baby Products.** Bisphenol-A is a harmful chemical found in many plastic children's products, including toys, baby bottles, formula can linings and sippy cups. Even at low exposure levels in animals, bisphenol-A is a potent hormone disruptor that stimulates prostate and breast cancer cells and is linked with adverse effects on male reproduction, miscarriage, insulin resistance and behavioral problems. A recent study links elevated BPA concentrations to an increased risk for heart disease, diabetes and liver abnormalities in humans. Given the availability of safer alternatives, BPA should be phased out to protect the health of young children, who are especially vulnerable to its effects.
- ✓ **Toxic Free Kids Act .** The proposed bill sets forth a comprehensive framework for promoting the use of safer chemicals in children's products. The bill includes a regulatory framework within the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for evaluating the safety of chemicals used in children's products to include: identification of priority chemicals; required manufacturer disclosure of children's products containing priority chemicals; evaluation of safer alternatives; and manufacturer replacement of priority chemicals.

Next Year

As LWV's Healthy Legacy committee learned more, it envisioned a series of Healthy Legacy forums. At the League's January program planning meeting, the committee proposed another public forum on the Minneapolis *Sustainability Greenprint*, covering effects of climate change, renewable energy, air quality, and water quality. (See www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability and www.lwvmpls.org)

~Kay Kessel and Emily Moore
Co-chairs, LWVMpls Legacy Committee

A PUBLIC FORUM

How Can Government Safeguard Our Children and Future Generations?

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 7 – 9 PM
LAKE HARRIET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
49TH AND CHOWEN AVENUE SOUTH, MPLS

MODERATOR: Joan Higinbotham, LWVMpls

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak
“Nurturing A Healthy Generation,” His Sustainability Vision For Minneapolis

PANEL 1: The Issues

Lindsay Dahl, Institute Of Agriculture & Trade Policy,
Co-Director, Healthy Legacy Coalition
Ann Kelly, M.D., M.P.H., Assistant Professor,
Division Of General Pediatrics, University of MN
Carolyn Raffensperger, Executive Director, Science & Health Network
Keith Ellison, U.S. Congressman

PANEL 2: *Elected Leaders Respond To Becoming Legal Guardians For Future Generations*

Margaret Anderson Kelliher, MN House Speaker
Patricia Torres Ray, MN Senator, Vice-Chair, Health, Housing, & Family Services Committee
Karen Clark, MN Senator, Author Of Two Healthy Legacy Bills
Paul Thissen, Chair, MN Representative, Health & Human Services Committee
Scott Benson, Mpls City Councilmember, Author of Environmental Purchasing Policy

EXHIBITORS

(6:30 PM and following the presentations)

- ✦ Mpls Sustainability Office ✦ MN Natural Health Legal Reform Project
- ✦ MN Nurses Association ✦ Healthy Child Healthy World ✦ MN Pesticide Awareness
- ✦ Indigenous Environmental Network ✦ MN Public Health Association
- ✦ Institute For Agriculture and Trade Policy ✦ MN Public Interest Research Group
- ✦ Kids For Saving Earth ✦ MN Technical Assistance Program
- ✦ League Of Women Voters (MN) ✦ Planned Parenthood MN, SD, ND
- ✦ Learning Disabilities Association MN ✦ Preventing Harm MN
- ✦ MN Association For Children's Mental Health ✦ Take Back The Air
- ✦ MN Center For Environmental Advocacy ✦ Women's Environmental Institute
- ✦ MN Council Of Churches ✦ Environmental Justice Advocates Of MN

SPONSORS: ✦ LWVMPLS & MN ✦ Healthy Legacy Coalition ✦ Mpls Sustainability Office
✦ Lake Harriet United Methodist Church Peace and Justice Committee

For more information call 612.333.6319 or visit www.lwvmpls.org

From the President

Janet Gendler

LWV is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Public education: this is always a topic of interest with Minneapolis residents. It's easy to have an opinion; all of us went to school. Many League members have children—even grandchildren—who attended Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS.) But most members, like most Minneapolis voters, no longer have the personal connection of a current student.

One of the goals for my term as LWVMpls President was to continue to make LWV the place to bring information and action on behalf of all the children—not just mine—of our city. Anticipated cuts in the coming year for state, county, and local budgets will result in decreased services for those least able to provide for themselves—our children.

How can League members make a difference?

- ✓ **Join our Education Committee Monday, February 2, 7:00-8:30 pm, at 3906 Zenith Ave South** as we meet to plan and prioritize

action for the coming year.

- ✓ Not able to attend the meeting? Look for postings on our website www.lwvmpls.org for announcements of future meetings in public spaces.
- ✓ Send an e-mail to the office (vote@lwvmpls.org) to get your voice included in the discussion.
- ✓ Invite a nonmember to join us. Neighbors who are current or former teachers have some of the most useful perspectives.

Ideas generated already include following up on facilities usage, school closings, and early childhood education.

Let's find a way to connect with the mothers and grandmothers of MPS students! Let's find a way to engage the fathers and grandfathers of our future leaders! Let's prove that LWVMpls is the place where we can make a difference!



Sharon Chapman

LWVMpls Welcomes New Administrative Manager

Selected from a field of over 50 candidates, Sharon Chapman brings a broad range of experience to the LWVMpls office manager position, including nine years at IBM, extensive non-profit experience, and a long history of activity in various organizations throughout the Minneapolis metro area. She also has taught courses at the graduate level on the subjects of Ethical Decision Making and Nonprofit Policy Formulation and Implementation at the University of St. Thomas.

We were glad to find a candidate like Sharon who has the broad range of skills and experience that is necessary for the demanding job of running the LWVMpls office. Many thanks to our hiring committee members: Tracey O'Neill Ruzicka, Pam Telleen, Carol Green, and Lonni McCauley for their invaluable time and effort in the hiring process.

~Annie Hall
Hiring Committee Chair



Looking for Lively Conversation?

February Unit Meetings: *National Popular Vote*



Unit 1

Mon, Feb. 9, 7:15 PM
4500 Dupont Av.e. S.
Contact: Lindsey Thomas, 612.824.4489

Unit 11

Tues., Feb. 10, 7:15 PM social, 7:30 meeting
3906 Zenith Ave. S.
Jan Midtbo, 612.926.0954 or
Judy Walter, 612.927.5847

Unit 25/29

Tues., Feb. 10, 7:00 PM
126 Orlin Ave. SE
Carol Green, 612.789.6314 or
Kate Donahue, 612.378.9538

Unit 48

Mon, Feb. 16, 7:00 PM
2104 Oliver Ave. S.
Jennifer Johnson, 612.377.6084

Unit 49

Please call for information.
Gerry Sell, 612.823.3248 or
Marilyn Kelly, 612.824.6404

Unit 53

Tues., Feb. 17, 7:30 PM social, 8:00 meeting
743 Cedar View Drive
Elaine Lindstrom, 612.377.3262
Marilyn Dean, 612.377.4223

Note Program Calendar Changes for 2009!

The Healthy Legacy forum approved at our City Convention has grown from a forum due to the hard work of committee members. In addition to the power-packed forum, they are preparing a dynamic unit meeting discussion guide for March. **This will mean adjusting the calendar for the rest of the year:**

- February—National Popular Vote**
- March—Healthy Legacy**
- April—Global Climate Change**
- May—LWV Program Reports: State of the City**
- June—LWVMpls City Convention**

Isn't it refreshing to see up-sizing!

Development Corner

Thank you to the following members and friends of the LWVMpls who have contributed since the last issue.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Anderson, Susan | Kaplan, Shirley |
| Beier, Betty | Keppel, Polly |
| Brynolfson, Rudolf A | Kimer, Barbara |
| Christopherson, Iola | Kovel-Jarboe, Patricia |
| Connors-Smith, Dani | Lilja, Dot |
| Fronek, Karlynn | Loud, Mary Lou |
| Gendler, Janet | Melloh, Christina |
| Gendler, John | Moller, Carol |
| Gray, Susan | Moormann, Alice |
| Green, Carol | Myers, Gwen S |
| Greenberg, Susan | Niemiec, Joan |
| Harder, Karen T | Paller-Rzepka, Laurel |
| Hegg, Catherine | Reichert, Elizabeth |
| Heit, Julaine | Sawyer, Sally |
| Hendrixson, Carolyn | Scott, Patricia E. |
| Higinbotham, Joan | Shepard, Sue |
| Hill, Susan | Sterrie, Norman |
| Hughes, Ellen | Ungar, Shirley K |
| Johnson, Harriet | Walter, Judy D |
| Johnson, Mary Katherine | Witta, Nancy |

League of Women Voters Minneapolis
81 South 9th Street, Suite 335
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Phone: 612.333.6319
Fax: 612.333.6310
Email: vote@lwvmpls.org
Website www.lwvmpls.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2865
Minneapolis, MN

MISSION

The League of Women Voters,
a nonpartisan political organization,
encourages informed and active
participation in government, works to
increase understanding of major policy
issues, and influences public policy through
education and advocacy.

Janet Gendler, President
Ginny Craig, VOTER Editor

We're on the Web!
www.lwvmpls.org

Upcoming Events Save the Date!

Mon., Feb. 2
7:00-8:30 PM
Education
Committee
3906 Zenith Ave So

Tues., Feb. 17
5:30-7:30 PM
Board Meeting
LWVMpls Office

Thur., March 5
6:30 - 9:30 pm
Healthy Legacy
Forum
Lake Harriet
Methodist Church
49th Street and
Chowen Av. S

www.lwvmpls.org Your Source for More Information

The *Voter* comes out once a month to provide information in a format accessible to all members, but it doesn't have flexibility to be as up-to-date or provide the in-depth information available on our website.

The website can provide: additional information on a study topic, or when/where a forum or meeting is being held, and a calendar of events.

Please visit our website; it is easy to navigate and we add information often in order to make the site more useful to members. Check there first, and if you don't find the information you want, please let us know so we can add it. We are trying to anticipate your needs, but appreciate input on what those needs are. Help us make the website and the *Voter* work for you. Call or email the office with your ideas.

~Julainne Heit, Website Coordinator
Ginny Craig, *Voter* Editor